

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2007

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE

PUBLIC WORK SESSION: 6:00 P.M.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY EXECUTIVE SESSION

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY PUBLIC HEARING

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY PUBLIC MEETING

MINUTES

A public work session of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at the William A. Briggs Building in the Reed Conference Room with the following members present: Mr. Archetto, Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi (arrived at 6:42 p.m.), Mr. Stycos, Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway, and Mr. Traficante. Also present were Mr. Nero, Mr. Votto, Mrs. Boyajian, Mr. Balducci, Mr. Laliberte, Mrs. Lundsten, Mr. Steven Knowlton, and Mr. Sean Kelly.

Chairman Traficante convened the work session at 6:05 p.m.

The roll was called.

Assistant Superintendent Peter Nero noted to the committee that the Superintendent's mother passed away yesterday morning. He will be

present for the hearing this evening, but at the present time he and his family are making arrangements.

Chairman Traficante indicated that Mr. Lombardi would be late for this meeting due to his work schedule.

III. Work Session Agenda

1. Automated Telephone System Presented by Cox Communications

Mr. Votto indicated to the committee that approximately three or four months ago he and Mr. Balducci had a conversation regarding trying to bring some efficiencies to this operation in the district. They looked at the switchboard area where there is a full-time person working five days a week, 37-1/2 hours per week. They asked Cox Communications to come in to present their automated telephone system to them. They did have a discussion with the central administration executive staff and outlined the Cox proposal to them. This would entail the elimination of a secretarial position which was not part of the original cuts when the School Committee adopted the budget.

It goes above and beyond that because they were in the process of developing this particular proposal.

Mr. Balducci remarked that they analyzed the salary and benefits for this position and compared it to the upfront, one-time cost associated with rolling this program out and then thereafter the monthly charge incurred by the school district. That position in next year's budget for salary and benefits is approximately \$48,000. This system would cost a monthly fee of \$250 and a one-time install fee of \$150. The first year it would cost \$3,150 as compared to \$48,000. Approximately \$45,000 would be saved. He further commented that he would like to spend some of that money next year. He explained that he would like to buy some high-end equipment for the copy room that would be used for stuffing and sealing letters and announcements that go out to the district. The MIS Department is looking to go to a particular type of check where the check is enclosed and one would have to undo the perforation. They are looking to roll this out for their payroll advices which are the direct deposit checks that are not live checks. They would like to upgrade the software and purchase stock and also a piece of equipment that will be used to transform the document into something that can enclose the check. They also want to do the same for the live payroll and vendor checks. One of the responsibilities of that position is that when the checks come off the system this person manually stuffs the envelopes. Because that position won't be there, administration needs to look elsewhere. They are looking to modernize the way they do business. Those

expenses will probably be one-time expenses of approximately \$20,000 between the software upgrades, purchasing the type of machine to tri-fold, and thereon after there will be manual maintenance costs associated with the software.

Mr. Votto pointed out that this position reports to Mrs. Boyajian. She had much input into crafting this telephone tree.

Representing Cox Communications were Jaime Foster, Cox Business Services; Michelle McCabe, Programmer for the Auto Attendant; and Patrick Murphy, Sales Engineer. They demonstrated the auto attendant to the committee and entertained questions from them.

Mrs. Greifer asked who the operator would be for this system, and Mr. Votto responded that if one hits "0" the call would be transferred to Human Resources. The clerical group there would answer those calls. They in turn will forward the call to the appropriate department.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway asked what would happen in the case of someone who still has a dial telephone. In response, Mr. Votto stated that after fifteen seconds the call would go to the operator.

Mrs. Greifer stated that she could anticipate people who will inquire about the possibility of having a Spanish version of the auto attendant. However, once they call the administration, the person won't have the option of speaking to someone in Spanish. Mr. Votto responded that with the exception of a few elementary schools or high schools, there are no Spanish speaking employees. It could be done for Gladstone School or Cranston High School East only. He wouldn't want to mislead someone that they can be helped by a Spanish speaking employee. One can still dial the direct number for a specific office.

Mr. Stycos noted under high schools that Tech Center wasn't the best choice of words. Mrs. Boyajian noted that they would be going through many of the titles of the schools to refine them. They will also add a line for Central Registration because that is a busy line. The same holds true for Special Services because there are now two buildings. They will look into streamlining those as well.

Mr. Votto indicated to the committee that there would be a resolution on the May 21st School Committee agenda to adopt this system. Administration wants to make sure that the committee gives them the go ahead because of the time constraint to have it installed by July 1, 2007 for the new fiscal year. Administration has notified the secretary in question as well as the Union that this potential exists that this job will be abolished, and there will be the process of bumping.

Mr. Traficante asked that by going to this methodology was the district saving dollars in that particular department, and Mr. Balducci responded that employees print the checks, and someone takes the checks to City Hall to use the check signing machine. As part of their working together, they are looking to change it so that the school department has a signature plate here. Eventually, the district will save money by making the department more efficient in what they do with their time.

Mr. Stycos stated that the folding machine should be put on hold until the committee had an opportunity to discuss the budget. He further commented that he was not saying that the district didn't need the folding machine, but they may need other things that cost \$20,000.

2. Proposed Student Attendance Policy

Mr. Steven Knowlton, Cranston High School West Principal, and Mr. Sean Kelly, Cranston High School East Principal, made a presentation to the School Committee regarding this policy.

Assistant Superintendent Peter Nero indicated to the committee that the committee members received in their packets a copy of the proposed student attendance policy

along with a copy of the policy to be repealed. He further commented that the two principals would be speaking to the committee because of the issues they face and the present policy that is in place. As the district moves forward with more academic rigor, the principals have issues with the present policy.

Mr. Knowlton indicated that he would give the committee some insight as to what the principals face on a daily basis in terms of the absenteeism and tardiness policy, etc. at the high schools. If the committee looked at the school report card from the state with all the identified targets there is also another target for attendance. Cranston West's target for attendance this year is 90%, and he knows that he can say from looking at the daily attendance at his school he will be shocked if they meet that target this year at West. It will be a shame if they put all the time and effort into addressing the entire math special education situation which was the target missed for the past few years and that is fixed, and they end up being still not being high performing because the students aren't coming to school. There are approximately 1,700 students in the school right now, and they have averaged every single day this week over 200 students being absent every day. Through the year as he checks the daily bulletin, they normally have been running anywhere from 150 to 190 students absent every day. They are flirting with that 90% mark right now. Mr. Kelly added that on any given date at Cranston High School East they

are running anywhere between 190 to 250 students absent from school that flat out do not come to school. Their total population is approximately 1650, and they will be hard pressed to meet that 90% target.

Mr. Traficante asked if all absences are verifiable by the parents, and Mr. Knowlton said that there are tons of students who are in Truancy Court. Every Wednesday they have Truancy Court that starts at his building at 2:00 p.m. and runs through until 5:00 p.m. some days. There are lines of students, and this is not addressing all of the students. Mr. Kelly noted that Cranston East's Truancy Court begins at 8:30 a.m. and runs until Noon. It is a constant battle with parents not sending in notes. The homeroom teachers are constantly chasing after the students to bring in the notes. They are given detention or alternative types of discipline. It is difficult to get any type of note let alone a doctor's note, dentist note, court appearance, etc.

Mr. Stycos asked that if school administration receives a note that a student was at the doctor or dentist did it count towards the attendance total. Mr. Kelly responded that it counts toward the attendance total, but if it is a doctor's note, court appearance, death in family, or driver's license, it is recorded as an excused absence. Anything other than that, it is recorded as an unexcused absence. Even if the parent writes a note stating that the child was home sick or had a flat tire, it is an excused absence. Mr. Stycos asked if an

excused absence counts as an absence, Mr. Knowlton said it still counts; however, there is no penalty for the student who comes in with one of those verifiable absent notes.

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Mr. Knowlton further commented that they are also dealing with tardiness to school. The students just don't come to school on time. There are all kinds of penalties in place. They have detention, Saturday school, the 2-1/2 hour detention, all with progressive disciplinary consequences all the way up to suspending students for cutting school and for being tardy. It is almost ridiculous and ludicrous that school administration is throwing students out of school when they are trying to keep them in school; but they are in a position where they have no other alternative.

Mr. Knowlton referred to class cuts and noted that they were off the charts. He feels badly for the assistant principals who are dealing with discipline because they have stacks and stacks of class cuts on students. They spend all their time not being educational leaders or administrators or helping to improve instruction. Instead they are constantly shackled with chasing students for excessive tardiness, for class cuts, and for not showing up for detentions. They feel there are two reasons that this exists. First, there is no attendance policy in place that other than the language that states the students should

be in school according to state law, there are no consequences or penalties in the event that they don't attend school. That is where this policy comes in that the principals are proposing. Secondly, both school principals run schedules of seven period days. It translates into seven periods or seven credits that the students can get credit for. Over four years, the students have the opportunity to accumulate twenty-eight credits in their four-year career. Students need twenty credits in order to graduate. There can be seniors rolling in, and for students who are not motivated or choose not to go to college, that means that eight out of twenty-eight credits they don't have to pass. They could possibly take one year off. If they are sitting in a class at any point in time of their high school career, and if they don't like the teacher or the material and know they don't need the class for graduation, they can cut that class every day or sit there and be a discipline problem. They can pick and choose to come late to school because they know that class is meeting first or second period. These are all the things that school administration is dealing with to get these kids to come to school but really don't have the tools to hold the students there. Regardless of what school administration does, there is going to be some group of students that no matter what administration does, they won't care and won't come to school. He has never personally, except for his first year in Coventry and that is in four high schools as an administrator, been in a school that didn't have an attendance policy. When he came to Cranston, he spoke with administration about it. When Mr. Scherza was in North Smithfield where Mr. Knowlton was, they had an

attendance policy. He was principal of grades 7-12, and they held between 95% to 97% attendance through most of the years he was there. When he went to Coventry, they had a situation where there was no attendance policy with an A- B block schedule, and it was just like it is in Cranston now. The students could blow off 25% of their courses. They went to a policy, and this proposed policy for Cranston is much like the model they developed during the fourteen years he was in North Smithfield. When he went to Coventry, they tweaked it and formulated it to meet their needs. Once it was put into place last year, Coventry's

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attendance improved approximately 3% on a monthly basis throughout the entire year. It wasn't perfect because they hadn't fixed the credit piece. There is a High School Diploma Committee that is reviewing the high school graduation requirements, and they have addressed the credit on a sequential basis. That will find its way to the committee as well. They are hoping to attack this situation from both ends to drastically improve this problem.

Mr. Kelly commented that it is a constant battle with the population at Cranston East in trying to get the students to school. School administration runs reports approximately once a month. First, they ask for students absent thirty days or more. They are now up to asking for students out sixty to seventy days or more. Some of the

students are just not coming to school. They also have the situation of students not signing into school and pick and choose the classes that he or she wants to go to. Mr. Knowlton noted that by a student not signing in they are not marked late which means they get no detention or any consequence yet they are still counted against the attendance roles on a regular basis.

Mr. Nero indicated that the other issue is the permissiveness of parents for the absenteeism and the out and out lying by parents. He has had issues when he was a principal where a student would come into school late beyond the normal time, and the parent would say her child had an orthodontist's appointment. He would ask the parent to have the dentist fax him the date of the appointment, and the parent would say that she was lying. The schools are asking for accountability that will go directly back to the student's grades. They are battling two issues since Cranston Public Schools has one of the lowest requirements in terms of credits for the State of Rhode Island. Secondly, the district lacks a policy. The committee members are elected officials, and there is an accountability so the committee will have to look at this with close scrutiny with regard to how they will look at it as a parent. Administration needs to get something in place because everything they do they like to be able to say that when they are enforcing something they have something in their hands they can rely on which is a School Committee policy that backs up administration.

Ms. Iannazzi asked if the committee would be including the attendance policy with the packet of information the students receive at the beginning of the year in their planners. Mr. Kelly responded that they hope they can get it in time; otherwise, they will include it as an addendum. Ms. Iannazzi asked if anyone from the Truancy team was consulted such as how the policy could be improved. Mr. Knowlton responded that some Truancy Court language is quoted in the proposed policy. Assistant Principal Straino handles all the truancy issues at Cranston West, and she works regularly with Angela Paulhus who was a member of the policy committee. Mr. Kelly added that he has spent three years in the Truancy Court. Mr. Nero commented that the Cranston East Truancy Court is being held in the Briggs Building because of the construction at Cranston East. Because it is within reasonable proximity to his office, the court brings him in on some

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heavy duty issues. Because the high schools work so closely on some of these issues, the principals are right as to what is contained in the proposed policy. The district has never had a policy for truancy. They use 10% of the days at any point in the year when a child can be referred to Truancy Court. If there were 100 days of school and a child is out ten or more days, and after checking with the guidance counselor for extenuating circumstances such as a surgery or a family issue, and in the absence of anything legitimate,

that is when it is referred to Truancy Court. Mr. Knowlton added that the Truancy Court would welcome the high schools having a policy like this because at West they are so inundated with truancy students hoping to target the younger students to try to save them. Ms. Iannazzi noted that she would be meeting with Ms. Paulhus tomorrow and would ask her if she had any suggestions for the policy.

Mrs. Greifer referred to 5113(a) of the regulations under No. 1 and noted that a phone number is listed. She asked if this was an example only, and Mr. Kelly responded that this was for example only.

Mrs. Greifer referred to 5113(b) under No. 6. She referred to "A.D.P." and suggested that it be written out so that people understand what it is. She further commented that she didn't think this section was clear enough regarding the progression of consequences. She asked who decides which of these consequences will be applied and after how many tardies. She asked if they wished to maintain this as discretionary. Mr. Kelly responded that this is current policy that is followed. The students are given three tardies; on the fourth tardy it is a regular detention; on the fifth it is supposed to be A.D.P. or a Saturday detention; and it progresses from there. Mr. Knowlton added that it was written this way because the two schools don't have all the same disciplinary modalities. They both have progressions, but they had to write this in language that would address both schools. Mrs. Greifer added that some of these issues apply to

elementary schools as well. Mr. Knowlton commented that they wrote this to address the high school concerns. It could be adapted to the middle and elementary schools. Mrs. Greifer said that it should be clear as a policy that if it is intended to be a high school policy it should state that. Otherwise, pieces from the middle and elementary schools should be included as it applies to them to make it all inclusive or re-title it. She suggested that there could be a separate policy for middle and a separate one for elementary. She understood that the high schools' problems are much more severe than the other levels.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway applauded the two principals for developing this policy as a parent whose children have gone all through this school system. With regard to attendance, at some point the committee should address how the parents are grown up to be so lax with their children. What she has seen from Kindergarten all the way through to high school is the parents who start by taking the children on vacation. They

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start in the elementary school. This is the snowball effect because she has seen so many families who have lied and come back with tans from Disney World. The rates are much lower in the fall. Not

only do the students from western Cranston go to Disney for a week every year, it is like a religion with these people. She asked if this situation would be addressed because these same parents go into the upper levels with their children. It is this whole culture that takes hold very young. The students learn it, and the parents tolerate it, and the parents become very indignant. She anticipates that there will be resistance.

Mr. Nero commented that the parents do have that permissiveness regarding vacations. He has told parents that if their child continued to be absent he would have to take them to Truancy Court. The parents can't believe that there are laws that they can be fined for keeping their child out of school because they are indignant to the whole situation. Secondly, he could speak for Western Hills Middle School which ran a 97% attendance rate because it is a rigid day and they are young. This policy could be passed by the middle school principals to see if they want any language added in or something tweaked to make it applicable for them. Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway added that the parents are getting the message that everyone is looking the other way. The teachers are looking the other way also because how are they going to go to bat against parents who will lie. The teachers can't prove it. It would set the tone to address these parents.

Mr. Nero noted that there was a policy of long duration where the parents fill out a form, and it is allowing the parents to break the law

under these conditions. Mrs. Greifer noted that there are some items in policies 5113 and 5113.1 to be repealed that should be pulled out or addressed elsewhere. One in particular is that elementary school pupils will not be kept after school without notification of parents or guardians at least one day in advance. This should be addressed somewhere else. Absence of long duration for serious illness should be kept and not repeal this policy wholesale. Mr. Nero noted that there are a number that should be repealed and a number that should be kept as well as others that should be added in as well. The secretary asked if there was anything in the Elementary Discipline Code Book that addressed elementary attendance, and Mr. Nero responded that there was. Mr. Nero suggested that the elementary portion could be included in whatever policy the high school principals come up with. The elementary principals could look at it for their approval. They could repeal the policy but include them in the new policy. Mrs. Greifer added that the policies should not be repealed wholesale because if they are not addressed elsewhere in a separate policy or handbook, they wouldn't want to lose them.

Mr. Archetto stated that by repealing them, the committee is throwing out some things they may want to keep. In the General Assembly, they would keep the old language and add new language to it. What he sees is a completely new attendance policy.

Mr. Archetto referred to 5113(a) No. 3 under “Absence, Tardiness and Dismissals”. He asked if this was new or if it was from the old policy, and Mr. Nero indicated that it was brand new. Mr. Archetto asked how they arrived at ten points. Mr. Knowlton responded that he has been in some districts where some people have tried that the penalty will be that the student will fail the course or will not receive credit. Those policies have always failed miserably. First of all, the Department of Education will not recognize that policy. They have had test cases with that. They had one in Burrillville when his children were in school, and the district lost on that. They came up with the ten points when he was in North Smithfield because they went from a policy that was loss of credit. If a school goes with that degree of severity there may be a student in December, January, or February that is beyond and asked what a school does with him for the remainder of the year. The school expects him to come to school, and he can’t possibly pass because he has already blown it. They went to this minus ten points which is a penalty. The Department of Education recognized it as not too excessive. The top-level students are taking advantage of things because they are smart; they take their time off and are great students; they come back and make it up; they are able to survive. However, if they exceed the number of absences, the top students are worried about class rank, grade point averages, going to good schools; and they don’t want to get a ten point whack on their average. This keeps them in school. The other group below

them that may be college bound or may be marginal students don't want a ten point hit either because a C student could drop to become an F student. It is inconsequential to the student who really doesn't care about anything; they won't come to school and will still continue to cut classes. In twenty-five years of dealing with attendance policies, he has found that this type of policy has been by far the most effective in terms of holding students accountable; they don't want to lose ten points.

Mr. Archetto stated that he agreed with Mr. Knowlton. It will hurt the students at both tiers; it will hurt the AP level students who can do the work and miss the grade; they will be affected by class rank. It will also hurt the student who is borderline who may pass who may get a D to get the credit to get his high school diploma who, because he falls into this parameter now, will fail. Mr. Knowlton added that it also won't bury a student. If a student loses ten points in one quarter, there is still room for him to get that average back up. He won't be buried for the year; there is an ability for the student to recoup to come to school and do the work.

Mr. Lombardi stated that Mr. Archetto raised a valid point. He wasn't sure why the committee would appeal an entire policy in total and replace it with something as opposed to legislatively it makes sense to repeal portions of this and add to it this new language; and this applies wherever it is not inconsistent. If it is inconsistent with the original policy, then the new policy prevails. Mrs. Greifer added that

most of the policy should go, but there are some things that should be retained. Mr. Nero commented that once the committee is in agreement on this document, it is within the committee's purview to add whatever they want to keep or delete from the past policy. The students

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figure out exactly what they need to do and what they are going to pass or cut. With the progressive discipline system, a student could be suspended for six days, but it wouldn't make sense because it would put the student in jeopardy of failing because he figured out that he could pass with a 65, 60, or 59 average. They will have to maintain at least a 70 average and be in school. If they are out more than five days, they risk the chance that they pull themselves down to an F and have to attend Summer School. Mr. Knowlton remarked that five days in the language represents 90% of the total days that they would be in class in the quarter, 90% being the target the state has established for the district.

Ms. Iannazzi indicated to Mr. Knowlton that prior to his coming to Cranston West, there was a big problem with students leaving mid day going for lunch, etc. She asked if this policy addresses that situation. Mr. Knowlton responded that there are still students who are leaving the campus, but from what he understands, it is significantly better; but it is nowhere near where they want it to be.

This policy would improve it. The students will have a lot at stake if they continue to take off, cut classes, or don't come to school. Ms. Iannazzi asked if there was any way to build into this policy any type of penalty for the students leaving the campus even if it is just for the lunch period. Mr. Kelly indicated that it would count as one of their five absences from that class. It is not five absences from school; it is five absences from class. If anyone cuts a class, that counts as an absence for that class. They could switch to a period attendance system so that for every period there would be attendance taken. As an example, they would be able to run reports to determine who was absent period four five times. Mr. Knowlton added that if there are students who are coming in every day at 9:00 a.m. without a rotating schedule, it is not just by the day. The teachers would take period attendance at the end of the quarter; they submit their quarterly roster of students with the number of students who are over the limit of more than five. That would be cross-referenced against the data base in terms of the number of absences they have in total and those that are excused with doctors notes that school administration has. They will send back documentation saying that a student is okay because he had a long-term medical illness and won't get a penalty. That will take a lot of doing because it is a lot of work on the part of administration. It is doable because they have done it before. At Cranston West, regardless of this attendance policy, any student who is caught who leaves the school building, because of the open campus atmosphere, if he leaves the campus, there are disciplinary consequences for that. The first time he is caught, the student will

get ADP; the second time he will get suspended for two or three days; and it is progressively more each time. That is already in existence. Mr. Kelly added that the same policy is in place at Cranston East. The first time a student is caught he is assigned two Saturday detentions.

Mr. Traficante commented to Mr. Kelly that Cranston East is facing a rather severe drop-out rate with an approximate 86% graduation rate. He asked what is being done in this particular area. Mr. Kelly responded that if they increase attendance on one end, it

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could have an adverse affect in terms of the graduation rate on the other end. Mr. Nero added that it goes back to the proverbial thing that if the speed limit is 25 and no one is adhering to it, it isn't raised to 30; it has to be enforced.

Mr. Stycos referred to 5113(a), No. 1, under Absence, Tardiness and Dismissals, and noted that as a parent he used to call in and would still get the automatic phone call that his child was not in attendance. Mr. Kelly responded that there was no way for them to remove the message even though he had called in. He added that the parents are thanked for calling in but that they will still receive the phone message and to please disregard it.

Mr. Stycos referred to 5113(b), No. 5, and questioned that there were

many levels of appeal. He asked if one level could be removed.

Mr. Stycos referred to 5113(b), No. 7, and questioned the time of 11:00 a.m. and noted that this time was pretty late given that school starts at 7:35 a.m. Mr. Kelly responded that 11:00 a.m. is a little more than halfway through the school day. Mr. Nero commented that traditionally when he was principal he always used 11:00 a.m. He was unsure if it was state law or not. This time is used in many school districts as the cut off time. Mr. Kelly added that if a student comes in after 11:00 a.m. it counts as an absence. Mr. Knowlton noted that if a student comes in from an orthodontist appointment with a note or from a funeral, that is different. Mr. Lombardi commented that the language has to be parallel with the rest of the unexcused absences. Mr. Kelly added there are many codes in the computer such as absent tardy, absent dismissed. If a student comes in with a doctor's note at 12:30 p.m. and hasn't been in for the entire day, technically under what they use as their credit for a day being 11:00 a.m., the student is still considered absent. This signifies that the student was absent but came in for a portion of the day. Absent dismissed is the reverse. The student came in but was dismissed before 11:00 a.m. and is considered absent.

Mr. Stycos again referred to No. 7 and noted that the sentence didn't make sense. "Should the tardiness occur on the last day before a weekend, the student will be likewise, ineligible to participate." He commented that this should be clarified.

Mr. Stycos referred to No. 11 and asked if this was saying that if the student is going to a dentist, doctor, or a legal obligation, the only way the absence is going to be excused is if there is verifiable documentation from them. Mr. Kelly responded that was correct. Mr. Stycos asked for a reason where a parental note would carry any weight. Mr. Kelly responded that he couldn't think of any. Mr. Stycos stated if there aren't any, then it should be taken out that a student can have a parental note. If there are some, then it should be made clear what exactly they are. Mr. Knowlton stated that if a parent wants to take their child out of school, they can take the child out of school if they want. Whether or not it is going to be excused, they need to have some documentation that

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they are taking the student. When the student comes back from the dismissal, he or she needs to bring back the verification from the dentist that this is where he was. Mr. Lombardi added that it could be a college visitation or a religious reason where a parent can give a note for that instance. Mr. Knowlton commented that the notes from parents where the child didn't feel good, had a headache, needed a haircut, or a nail appointment are not acceptable.

Mr. Stycos felt that the first sentence was still vague under No. 11. It should be stated that if there is an acceptable reason, it will be an

excused absence. In the following sentence, the word “other” should be removed. Mrs. Greifer commented that with regard to a religious observance in the case of a family death, the obituary should be presented along with the parental note. Mr. Lombardi noted that this section refers to a student being dismissed from school.

Mr. Stycos referred to 5113(c), Make Up Policy, and asked for an explanation of the first sentence. Mr. Kelly explained that if a student is absent for one day and his class met on that day, the student will have one day to make up the work. If a student is absent for three days and the class met for three days, the student will have three days to make up the work. The school drops a period every day so if a student were absent for three days and the class met only twice, the student would have two days to make up the work. Mr. Stycos cited the example that there is homework while he is out, and he has a few days, depending upon how long he was out to hand in the homework, test, or paper. Mr. Nero commented that this is consistent with what is being done presently.

Mr. Stycos referred to the Final Exams portion of the policy regarding the statement that final exams are required in every course. He asked what happens in an art or technology course and suggested that a project might be more suitable for a final exam. Mr. Kelly responded that the final exam is designed by the teacher and it may be an implied learning type of thing. Mr. Knowlton added that it could be some type of oral presentation. If they don't show up without going

through this appropriate attendance procedure, they get a zero.

Mr. Nero stated that he wanted the principals to tweak this proposed policy suggested by the School Committee. Once this is accomplished, it will be shown to the middle school principals. It will also be given to the elementary principals for their review. The committee will then determine what they want to retain and add to the policy or however way they think is legally right or able and capable of doing. If there are any other suggestions as they read through this policy, the committee can e-mail the principals.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway asked if there would be a head up as she can see the parents pulling their children out of school next year for vacations. They may get penalized for having to cancel trips. Mr. Nero responded that he already has received a phone call from a parent indicating that school has always started after Labor Day which is untrue.

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It has been done three times in the last twelve or fourteen years where school opened prior to Labor Day. The parent said that they had booked a European vacation, and the family would be away the last two weeks of August. He told her to call the principal at the school to tell him the situation at the school. Hopefully, some reasoning will come out of this. Mr. Kelly added that with regard to a

European vacation, if it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and it is an educational experience, both he and Mr. Knowlton have talked about. They would grant permission for this. If it is a once-in-lifetime opportunity to play for a national championship, he would tell the student to go represent the community because he is representing Cranston. If it is a student going to Disney World for the fifth time, that is different. Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway indicated that she raised this concern because when administration starts making exceptions there is an uneven application of a policy, and parents will be screaming due process and precedent. Parents can be very manipulative, and they all seem to know who got away with what. She wouldn't want to see that the district is not enforcing its policies. Mr. Lombardi cautioned them to be careful of that very slippery slope. People can say they are going to Europe for educational reasons, and they are not doing it for that purpose.

Mr. Nero stated that if a student is absent 22 days and is doing poorly in school and the family takes this child to Disney World, that is a problem because he will not back down.

Mr. Knowlton remarked that with respect to communication that as soon as they have the green light that this is policy they can put it on their list serve. He sends out a newsletter in August prior to the start of school. Last year he sent out a newsletter with all the new expectations. There will be some fights along the way with this, but administration and the committee have to take the stand and fight the fight. They have to use discretion and good judgment. He has found

that the longer the policy is in place and the more consistently they enforce it, the better it will work. If there is a unified front and they are mutually supportive that it is the right way to go, it takes care of itself in time. With regard to vacations, when he was in Coventry he asked the parents to produce for him the documentation when their trip was booked. If that parent brought in and proved that they had booked their flight the previous May and the policy was not communicated to them until August, he allowed them to go because he didn't feel it was right.

The work session was adjourned to Executive Session at 7:13 p.m.

Mr. Traficante called for a ten-minute recess.

IV. Convene to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel and PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation.

Mr. Traficante re-convened the public session at 8:00 p.m.

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All School Committee members were present. Also present were Mr. Scherza, Attorney Ben Scungio, Attorney Kevin Daley, Mr. Nero, and

Mr. Votto.

V. Executive Session Minutes Sealed – May 16, 2007

Moved by Mr. Archetto, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried that the May 16, 2007 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

VI. Continuation of Public Hearing for Pre-termination Hearing on Non-tenured Certified Teacher A.

Attorney Scungio asked the committee to continue this hearing for two weeks. The attorneys are trying to work toward a solution that would make all parties, including the School Committee, satisfied. They feel they can do it within that time period. They do not believe it will be a hearing. If it is, there will be an alternate date to May 29, 2007.

Moved by Mr. Stycos, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried to continue this hearing to May 29, 2007.

IV. Adjourn Public Meeting

Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned.

**There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was
adjourned at
8:07 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Andrea M. Iannazzi
Clerk**